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SALT

The SALT Sellers


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WITH A SALT agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union coming together, with a date and place selected for the Carter-Brezhnev signing ceremony, and with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance frantically trying to head off any changes in the Senate, you can be sure that the selling of SALT will be lavishly backed by the administration.

For example, at the end of this week the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce will host its annual Armed Forces Day luncheon. Last year the speaker was Gen. Louis H. Wilson, commandant of the Marine Corps. This year the speaker is retired Army Lt. Gen. George M. Seignious.

Gen. Seignious is head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, having succeeded that cooing dove, Paul Warnke, late last year.

While I am not privy to what Gen. Seignious will touch on in his luncheon speech, if I were a wagering man I would give heavy odds that his entire address will consist of soothing syrup for the purpose of selling SALT.

Nor is Gen. Seignious unique. You can be sure that as requests have poured into the Pentagon for Armed Forces Day speakers, Defense Secretary Harold Brown has seen to it that all those who go out will tout the administration line that SALT is the only prescription for peace in the world. Anyone on active service will realize his career is on the line and he will do as he is ordered, no matter his real feelings on the matter.

After all, there are precious few men who have the guts of Maj. Gen. John K. Singlaub.

And all the SALT selling brings to mind the double talk found in George Orwell's "1984," in which war is peace and peace is war.

In its publication, National Security Record, the Heritage Foundation has come forth with some disturbing facts regarding the selling of SALT in 1978. By disturbing is meant the amount of government time and government effort and government money—all of which is financed by your taxes—expended in an effort to lull the public and the public's representatives into a false sense of security.

The Heritage Foundation's report is based on a review of internal State Department year-end activities reports which spelled out events in which State Department officials participated:

It showed that in selling SALT the State Department used more than 1,100 public appearances of its personnel last year. The costs were placed at more than \$600,000. And those figures do not include appearances by members of the Defense Department and White House personnel.

The report shows that selling SALT required the efforts of nearly 100 different State officials.

"By contrast," National Security Record points out, "the CIA is reported to have about half as many senior analysts evaluating Soviet strategic programs."

Well, it's easy to see where the Carter administration places its priorities.

Keep in mind that the 1,128 public appearances by State Department officials—plus God knows how many public appearances by Defense Department officials and White House personnel—were done in a low level year before the treaty was completed.

National Security Record quoted one State Department official to this effect:

"If you could see the number of events planned for the week of the announcement (of SALT II) and the week of the signing—well, they make those (1978) figures look like chicken feed."

After all, it's only the public's money that is being lavished in all directions to sell the public on a treaty that is not verifiable and can only lead to unquestioned Soviet military superiority over the declining United States.

In the preceding issue of National Security Record, the sticky problem of verification was explored and this revealing observation was attributed to Admiral Godfrey, Britain's director of Naval Intelligence in World War II:

1. There exists an unwillingness of authority to believe information that has awkward political implications;
2. The tendency of military officers, and others who have taken part in negotiations, to become advocates of the integrity of persons with whom they secured the agreement, and to lose the skepticism which is part of vigilance;
3. Technicians may not be the best judges of enemy intentions and achievement. They find it hard sometimes to believe that what they cannot do or have not thought of doing has been done by the other side.

These are worth thinking about as we hear the cooing of the SALT sellers.